

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

August 18, 2026 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, August 18, 2026 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Patrick Kaag; Council Pro-Tem Denise Drobnick; Council Members Justin Choate, Maggie Seaman, Bethany Bower, and Vicki Haller Graff; Solicitor Daniel Becker; Engineer Pamela Stevens; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; Code Department Manager & Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Assistant Treasurer Helen Moyer; Recreation Director Michael Esterly (arrived 7:53 p.m.); Borough Manager Randall Miller; Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Mayor Samantha Kaag was unable to attend.

VISITORS:

James Rogers, Resident	Patricia Spencer, Resident
Dianne Schonaur, Resident	Jean Witmer, Resident
Michael Clark, Resident	Eileen Jones, Resident
Lukas Slezak, Resident	Dr. Charles Barbera, Reading Hospital
Lance Parmer, Fire Police (via Zoom)	Anne Marie Kline, Reading Hospital Foundation
Tamara Adolph, Resident	Mary Ellen Batman, Reading Hospital Foundation
Karen Livingood, Resident	

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **PRESENTATION:** Members of the Reading Hospital and Reading Hospital Foundation presented an AED unit to the borough through their HeartSAFE Program and noted that they sponsor the Reading Hospital Road Run event.
3. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** An executive session was held at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, August 12, 2026, to discuss a personnel matter, and this evening at 6:00 p.m. to discuss labor negotiations, potential litigation, and personnel matters.
4. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** There were no amendments to the agenda.
5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**
Mr. Rogers provided an update on Business Privilege Tax collection efforts for calendar year 2025, noting 155 delinquent accounts. He requested that his list of businesses that have not secured a 2025 Business Privilege License, as of August 5, 2026, be submitted into public records.

Ms. Witmer expressed frustration with the skunk population in the borough, noting that the borough is not addressing the problem by enforcing regulations requiring trash cans with tight-fitting lids and by addressing feral cat feeding. Mr. Moyer indicated that violation notices are issued for these violations and noted the difficulty of witnessing feral cat feeding without entering private property. These violations are primarily enforced through neighbor complaints that allow access to their property to obtain the evidence needed to issue a citation. It was noted that placing food out for rodents or feral cats is considered rodent harborage. Another aspect that relies on community feedback is habitat feasibility. The number of sheds and other places for skunks to hide makes it difficult to keep them out of the area. Ms. Witmer asked about facilitating a Trap, Neuter, Release Program (TNR) for feral cats, similar to neighboring

municipalities. Mr. Moyer reported that borough regulations prohibit animals from running at large, which indicates that if you take custody of an animal and then release it, you have violated those regulations. It was noted that a TNR program is effective when a large group of people is willing to identify colony locations.

Mrs. Jones asked about efforts to educate the community on proper procedures. It was noted that the newsletter mailed to residents twice per year includes this information. Ms. Drobnick asked where a concerted education campaign would be best received. Options included Facebook, the newsletter, the website, and a welcome-type program. Mr. Slezak indicated that the borough does have some sort of welcome program in place because he received information when he purchased his home in 2024. It was unclear how to best notify the ever-changing tenant population.

Mrs. Jones also asked about efforts to educate parents and children on e-bike and e-scooter laws. Chief Tornielli reported that the bicycle ordinance was recently revamped to include e-bikes and scooters, noting that electric scooters may be used only on private property unless the vehicle is registered and inspected, which most do not have the necessary safety equipment. The ordinance updates allow enforcement on public sidewalks. Recent seasonal education information provided by the Police Department to the public included pedestrian safety, scooters, and e-bikes. Officers visit local schools throughout the year to educate children on these types of topics. State citations issued to minors will remain active until the person applies for a driver's license, which could potentially be suspended upon issuance. Ms. Haller Graff shared the school district's communication efforts to remind parents that e-bikes are not allowed on school property.

Ms. Adolph recounted instances where she witnessed patrons of Brewer's Bar and Grill and Third and Spruce who found themselves in close proximity to skunks and were concerned about getting sprayed. She noted instances of e-bike and scooter traffic coming into the borough from the City of Reading and asked whether we are working with the city on these regulations. She reported an adult on an e-bike that struck her vehicle at the Third and Penn Avenue intersection because he did not stop. Chief Tornielli shared that, after years of working in the city, it is difficult and dangerous to enforce adult violators who take off at high speeds during e-bike or ATV infractions.

Ms. Adolph inquired about creating a bat house in the rear of her property to deter the bats from entering her home. Mr. Moyer indicated that the animal ordinance includes regulations on bat houses. Ms. Adolph reported several sewer backups in the 300 Block of Chestnut Street and requested that the main be monitored regularly. Mr. Grassley indicated that the main has only backed up once in 30 years.

Ms. Spencer of the 300 Block of Chestnut Street indicated that in 2024 the borough performed a major tree root extraction from the main, which allowed a period of two years without sewer backups, and shared her recent experience with a major sewer backup in her home in May of this year. Cleaning and repairs resulted in \$8,600 of uncovered expenses. Mr. Grassley explained that grease caused the recent backup, and the steep incline between homes allows water to enter her basement, the lowest point, before going uphill. Ms. Spencer asked how to ensure a sewer

backup does not happen again. Mr. Grassley recommended installing a backflow preventer on her sewer lateral.

Ms. Schonaur inquired about the first warning signs of a sewer backup. Mr. Grassley stated that a basement sink drain may gurgle or drain slowly, and a puddle forming on the basement floor would be the first signs of a backup. How quickly it progresses from there depends on how much water you're using and the situation outside. Each home has an individual line to the main trunk line in the street. The type of toilet paper used inside the home matters; it was recommended to buy a septic-safe product, such as Scott, that quickly dissolves into tiny pieces.

Mrs. Livingood asked if the timer associated with the traffic signal at Parkside Drive and Museum Road has been corrected, noting that only one car can cross Museum Road heading westbound before the light changes. It was noted that a recent power outage may have caused the timing change, and a call to Telco should correct the problem. Mrs. Livingood shared her wonderful experience at National Night Out this year and hopes everyone can attend next year.

Mr. Slezak spoke of the dead borough tree in front of his home that he cannot remove. Mr. Grassley reported that a company has been hired to remove a few trees on Friday, August 28.

Mr. Esterly joined the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

Ms. Schonaur spoke of a neighbor's tree branch that encroaches on her backyard over the power line. Mr. Grassley recommended that she report the issue to the Met-Ed Forestry Department.

President Lineaweaver thanked everyone for coming to share their concerns. He noted that Borough Council wants to solve these problems too. As a public entity, residents may not always appreciate how we need to do things, but we're here for you to the best of our ability. President Lineaweaver appreciated the residents for holding Borough Council accountable.

Mrs. Jones, Ms. Witmer, Mr. Clarke, Ms. Adolph, Ms. Spencer, and Ms. Schonaur departed the meeting at 7:57 p.m.

6. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve July 21, 2026, regular meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 7-0.**

7. **ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Resolution 2026-16 Berks County Local Share Assessment Grant** – This \$142,695 grant request would provide additional security cameras to the Bicentennial House and park areas. Motion to request grant funding to provide additional security cameras to the Bicentennial House and Basketball and Pickleball Court areas. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Haller Graff. **Motion carried 7-0.**

8. **CONSULTANTS' REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Mr. Becker did not have anything new to report at this time.
- b. **Engineer's Report** – Ms. Stevens noted that the Green Light-Go Year 11 grant was awarded to the borough in the amount of \$219,672 for the Reading Avenue, Eighth Avenue, and Hill Avenue structural rebuild. The match is roughly \$55,000.

The Automated Red Light Enforcement (ARLE) Funding Program, administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, provides critical grant money for municipalities to upgrade school zone signals, crosswalks, and flashing signs. A grant opportunity will be available in April 2027; the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee could recommend a project scope.

The Met-Ed Sustainability grant award of \$75,000 should be announced next month to replace 10 HVAC units. The match would be \$7,500.

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

9. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** President Lineaweaver shared that he was asked to join the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS) conference near Pittsburgh this fall to present on crisis communication.

President Lineaweaver reviewed the following action items:

- a. **Committee Appointment** – As a new member of Borough Council, President Lineaweaver requested consideration of appointing Maggie Seaman to the Economic Development Committee.

Motion to appoint Maggie Seaman to the Economic Development Committee. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Green Light-Go Grant** – President Lineaweaver requested ratification of acceptance of the Green Light-Go Year 11 grant award for Reading, Eighth and Hill Avenue structural traffic signal improvements.

Motion to ratify acceptance of the Green Light-Go Year 11 traffic signal upgrade grant award. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Settlement Agreement** – Per the outcome of executive session discussions on Wednesday, August 12, 2026, a motion was made to accept a settlement agreement from a previous employee. **Moved** by Ms. Haller Graff and seconded by Ms. Seaman. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Council President's report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

10. **BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:** Mr. Miller reviewed the following action items:

- a. **EPA Brownfield Assessment Coalition** – Last year we had gone with a coalition of other clerks and county municipalities looking for grant applications for the EPA Brownfield Assessment. We did not get in last year's round, but we would like to try again.

Motion to provide a letter of commitment to the Berks County Redevelopment Authority for the EPA Brownfield Assessment Coalition Grant application. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Slezak departed the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

- b. **Smooches & Co. Halloween Pup Parade** – An event at the pavilion on October 31 is planned with food and alcohol vendors from Noon to 4:00 p.m., hosted by The Bar Cart. The event

would wrap up before trick-or-treating. Ms. Bower noted that a recent fundraiser raised \$50,000, which was donated to rescues and friendly shelter spaces.

Motion to approve the Smooches & Co. Halloween Pup Parade at the pavilion on October 31, 2026, from Noon to 4:00 p.m. with food and alcohol vendors. **Moved** by Ms. Seaman and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Reading Hospital Road Run** – This year's event is scheduled to take place on October 18, 2026. As in past years, a fee waiver was requested for the barricades, cones, no parking signs, and permit fee for this non-profit fundraiser. Actual manpower costs associated with this event are compensated. Chief Tornielli confirmed the same route will be followed as last year.

Motion to approve the Reading Hospital Road Run event on October 18, 2026, from 8:00 a.m. to Noon, and waive the barricade, cone, temporary no parking signs, and permit fees. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Mr. Choate and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

11. **MAYOR'S REPORT:**

Mayor Kaag was unable to attend tonight's meeting, and no report was available.

Ms. Stevens departed the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

12. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Tornielli highlighted the following:

- Calls for service and officer-initiated activities are on par with previous months.
- National Night Out was a successful event that brought the community together.
- French Fry Festival was a well-run event without incident.
- Planning is underway for the Fall Festival event on September 19.
- The promotional written examination took place on July 25 by the Civil Service Commission. The Commission certified the examination results on August 12. A structured interview process will be conducted by the PA Chiefs of Police Association on August 26. We are initiating our entry-level hiring process.
- Data integration testing in the new RMS program, UCR reporting, and Labs has been verified. This program handles all the crime analysis and data you see in the monthly report. The monthly report includes the 2025 year-end metric report and the 1st- and 2nd-quarter 2026 metric reports. An average five-year trend is tracked.
- In 2025, there were four reportable de-escalation incidents reported to the state. The recently enacted use-of-force policy is under review for revision to include use of force within a broader subject management policy. This will allow better data tracking. In the first half of 2026, there were no use-of-force incidents and one de-escalation incident.

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Choate and seconded by Ms. Haller Graff. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley offered to answer any questions about his report. He noted that a Lancaster-based company painted the traffic circle, saving roughly \$40,000. The following action items were reviewed:

- **Equipment Trailer** – Consideration was requested to purchase a budgeted trailer to haul equipment. Scaled-back plans brought the cost to \$13,200, saving \$16,800 and avoiding the bidding process. Motion to approve the purchase of a trailer to haul equipment, not to exceed \$13,200. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 7-0.**
- **Dump Truck Purchase** – This will be a two-part purchase of an 11-ton dump truck between two dealers. The body cost from Tom Masano Ford is \$82,827; the dump body parts from E.M. Kutz, Inc. are \$96,636, for a total of \$179,463, which is under the budgeted amount of \$210,000. A check is needed to purchase the body from Tom Masano Ford so E.M. Kutz, Inc. can add the dump body parts. The old 11-ton dump truck can be listed for sale once the new truck is in service. Both vendors are authorized COSTARS vendors. Motion to approve the purchase of a budgeted replacement dump truck from Tom Masano Ford, not to exceed \$82,827. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Haller Graff. **Motion carried 7-0.**
- **Seasonal Position** – An extra eight weeks were requested to retain one part-time seasonal position to offset the staffing shortage. The eight-week period would commence after Labor Day for a total of 25 hours per week. Motion to extend one seasonal employee eight weeks to offset a staffing shortage. **Moved** by Mr. Choate and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Seaman. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer did not have anything new to add to his report. The following action items were reviewed:

- Motion to accept a letter of resignation from Assistant Chief Andrew Gudinas, who moved to Pottsville. **Moved** by Ms. Haller Graff and seconded by Ms. Seaman. **Motion carried 7-0.**
- Motion to accept the resignation of Jamie Keith from the Captain position for the remainder of the 2026 term, contingent upon his appointment to the position of Assistant Chief. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**
- Motion to appoint Jamie Keith to fill the remainder of the Assistant Chief Term for 2026. **Moved** by Mr. Choate and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer did not have anything to add to his report and provided an update on the garage at 542 Franklin Street. The owner cannot afford to demolish the garage. Under the International Property Maintenance Code, the borough can demolish the garage, seek restitution, and ultimately place a lien on the property if restitution is not made. Three quotes have been received. Empire Wrecking came in at \$9,990; JP Junk Removal came in at \$7,500; and Dinosaur Demolition and Salvage came in at \$6,800. Motion to approve the lowest

contract price with Dinosaur Demolition and Salvage in the amount of \$6,800 to demolish the garage at 542 Franklin Street. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Haller Graff. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Seaman and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF)** – In the absence of Mr. Price, President Lineaweaver provided highlights from his written report:

- Social media feedback on the French Fry Festival was to expand the event to three blocks along Penn Avenue to accommodate crowds. The team would need to review logistics and costs before expanding. Another suggestion was to place industrial-sized fans with a mist feature to provide patrons with relief from the August heat.
- The 2nd Friday recap was that all went well.
- A request to PennDOT was submitted to approve the Penn Avenue road closure for the Fall Festival event.
- Plans are underway for the October 15 fall college night on the Avenue.
- The winter Farmers' Market may be moved to the old Schweitzer location, and possibly to Tulpehocken Avenue as a more permanent location. It was noted that since paid parking was instituted on the Schweitzer lot, no one has been parking there. It is incumbent upon Borough Council to decide what to do with this property.
- Restaurant Week is scheduled for September 20 – 26 and is being led by the American Diner and Midtown Sip, Savor, Social.

Motion to accept the WRCRF report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

13. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly shared that he and Ms. Drobnick presented a plaque to the West Reading Basketball Team with Mr. Edward Kuhn. The Battle of the West Reading Karaoke Stars is scheduled for September 6 at Third & Spruce. This week is the final weekday schedule for the pool season. The Pups at the Pool event will take place on Labor Day at the pool and benefit Berks Humane Society. Plans are underway for the annual Haunted House sponsored by Discovery Federal Credit Union. The Playground Program ended well on July 31. The Recreation Commission has begun planning the 2027 calendar of events.

Motion to accept the Recreation Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Seaman. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Planning Commission** – President Lineaweaver noted the lack of a quorum this month. The available members held a workshop. Although the Commission made no official recommendation on the Curative Zoning Amendment associated with Data Center Use, the solicitor received draft language to begin reviewing proposed regulations.

Motion to accept the Planning Commission workshop report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – The August Economic Development Committee meeting was canceled.
- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – The July Environmental Advisory Council meeting was canceled.
- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – The August Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting was canceled.
- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – The August Shade Tree Commission meeting was canceled.
- g. **Safety Committee** – President Lineaweaver noted the review of a video on safety audits this month.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Choate and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- h. **Finance Committee** – The August Finance Committee meeting was canceled.

14. **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

- a. **2027 Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO) Pension Plan** – The total financial requirement for the 2027 Police Pension Plan is \$525,904; there is no financial requirement for the overfunded Non-Uniformed Pension Plan; the financial requirement for the Defined Benefit plan members is \$79,850.

Motion to approve the 2027 Minimum Municipal Obligation Pension Plan contributions of \$525,904, \$0, and \$79,850 for the Police, Non-Uniformed, and Defined Benefit plans, respectively. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Financial Statement Ending 7/31/2026** – There were no questions or comments.
- c. **Payment Approval Report 7/22/26 to 8/13/26 and 8/14/26 to 8/18/26** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 7/31/2026 and Payment Approval Reports of 7/22/26 through 8/18/26. **Moved** by Ms. Seaman and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

15. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers requested consideration of extending the hours of the upcoming Fall Festival and providing tables and chairs for a better dining experience. He was pleased with the number of public attendees at the meeting tonight to discuss their concerns.

Ms. Moser stated that she did not attend the French Fry Festival this year because she knew there would be no place to sit to eat. Adding a few tables, encouraging vendors to provide tables, and extending the festival area to three blocks may create a more welcoming atmosphere.

Mrs. Livingood shared a quick story about the amazing pool staff this year, where a girl ran from the pool entrance into the pool in her street clothes. All lifeguard staff responded to this Red Cap incident and asked the girl to exit the pool until she had a swimsuit. The girl then ran back into the pool a second time. The teenage staff members responded uniformly and professionally.

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16. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Haller Graff. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary